



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Oregon Fish & Wildlife Office  
2600 SE 98<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ste. 100  
Portland, Oregon 97266  
Phone: 503/231-6179  
Fax: 503/231-6195

# News Release

June 26, 2002

02-63

Contact: Jenny Valdivia or Robin Bown, 503/231-6179

## **COASTAL CUTTHROAT TROUT POPULATION DOES NOT NEED ESA PROTECTION**

The southwestern Washington/Columbia River population of coastal cutthroat trout does not need Endangered Species Act protection, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In a decision released today, the agency said that newly gathered and reanalyzed data on the species' abundance, and recently enacted protections for the fish and its habitat, combine to make it unnecessary to list this population.

"The system worked," said Anne Badgley, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's six-state Pacific Region. "We are grateful to our partners at the federal, state and local levels in Oregon and Washington who have worked to conserve this native fish. We encourage everyone involved in cutthroat conservation to continue to address the needs of this population segment."

While numbers of trout in some parts of this population segment are lower than historic levels, recent changes in land management regulations have reduced threats to this population. The latest information shows that overall populations in a large portion of the southwestern Washington/Columbia River area are relatively robust, and the offspring of freshwater populations are likely able to become anadromous (sea-run). This information lead scientists to conclude that coastal cutthroat trout in this population segment are not likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future, the definition of a threatened species.

"After this population was proposed for listing, we gathered more data on it and discovered that while there still are concerns, the fish are doing better than we thought," Badgley said. "The withdrawal of the proposal to list coastal cutthroat trout does not mean we think there are no threats to the species, or that we are no longer concerned about its long-term status."

This population of coastal cutthroat extends from the tributaries of Grays Harbor, Wash., south to the mouth of the Columbia River and east to The Dalles Dam. The area includes metropolitan Portland south to Willamette Falls. The Northwest is home to six populations of coastal cutthroat trout, which is one of

the 10 formally described subspecies of cutthroat trout.

The Service's decision that this population of coastal cutthroat trout does not meet the definition of a threatened species at this time is largely based on five specific factors:

- New data on populations of coastal cutthroat trout in southwestern Washington, which are comparable to populations in other areas that were not considered warranted for listing.  
New information and analysis of anadromous population size and trends in the Columbia River;
- New data and analyses which do not support suspected declines of adult populations in the Grays Harbor tributaries;
- New information supporting the potential production of anadromous offspring by resident cutthroat trout populations living above barriers such as dams or waterfalls.
- Habitat Conservation Plans and significant changes in Washington State Forest Practices Regulations, which reduce the threat of cutthroat habitat decline on forest lands.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service jointly published a proposal to list this coastal cutthroat trout population as threatened on April 5, 1999. Since then the Fish and Wildlife Service assumed sole responsibility for this species because it spends most of its life cycle in fresh water. The original proposal was based on suspected declines in anadromous cutthroat abundance, habitat loss and effects of hatchery-reared coastal cutthroat trout on wild cutthroat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

###

**NOTE:** This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Pacific Regional home page on the Internet at <http://www.r1.fws.gov> or the National home page at: <http://www.fws.gov/r9extaff/renews.html>.